



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Baltimore District

Site 104 Newsletter

Site 104 Open Water Dredged Material Placement

August 1997

Issue No. 1

Potential Open Water Placement of Dredged Material at Site 104

A study is being initiated that will evaluate the environmental impacts of placing clean dredged material at Site 104, near Kent Island, in the upper Chesapeake Bay. This newsletter is part of a series of public involvement activities designed to provide information about the study to interested citizens and to request information from the public. This newsletter provides background information on Site 104 and on the studies being conducted to determine the suitability of the site for use as a placement site. The focus of the study is the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will identify the environmental impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of the potential project.

Study Background

Site 104 is a previously used 1,800 acre open water placement site located about 2,000 feet north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and one mile west of Kent Island. The site is a long rectangle, approximately four and a half miles long and one half mile wide. At the request of the Maryland Port Administration (MPA), and in accordance with the Clean Water Act, the Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District is evaluating the site for placement of approximately 18 million cubic yards of clean dredged material. The 1996 Governor's Action Plan for Dredged Material Management recommended Site 104 as an open water placement site, based on previous use of the site for dredged material placement, the lack of significant adverse effects indicated by environmental monitoring conducted in 1975-76, the potential capacity of the site, and the potential for improving conditions at the site.

Beginning in 1924, the site was used for dredged material placement for a period of 50 years. Following its last use (placement of approximately 850,000 cubic yards of material in 1975), environmental monitoring was conducted. The monitoring indicated no significant adverse environmental impacts. If the results of current environmental evaluation studies indicate that placing additional material would not result in significant adverse impacts, more material, filling

the site to a depth of -45 feet, may be placed. The clean material

to be placed would be dredged from Federal navigation channels in the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay, including the Craighill Entrance, Craighill Channel, Craighill Angle, Craighill Upper Range; Cutoff Angle; Brewerton Channel Eastern Extension; Swan Point Channel; Tolchester Channel; and the Southern Approach Channel to the C & D Canal. (See attached map.)

In addition to the potential environmental impacts, the evaluation of Site 104 will include an investigation of possible alternative sites, different types of dredging equipment, and different methods for placing the material. The impacts to be evaluated include the effects of the project on conservation, economics, aesthetics, energy needs, general environmental concerns, fish and wildlife values, historic values, navigation, water quality, recreation, safety, food production, and in general, the needs and welfare of the public.

The results of the evaluation will be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will include descriptions of the investigations made, existing site conditions, probable impacts of dredged material placement, and public responses to the potential project. The EIS will also describe the recommended plan, which may be "no action," or no further use of the site. Copies of the draft EIS will be distributed for public review in early 1998. The

EIS will be available at local libraries, government offices, or by mail if requested.

Public Involvement

There is considerable public interest in the potential use of Site 104, and an extensive public involvement program is being conducted as part of the study. Public involvement is important both because more ideas result in better projects and because the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that the public be informed about, and involved in, projects that use Federal money, are built on Federal lands, or that require Federal permits. Several public involvement activities have already been completed: Public Notices were mailed to approximately 350 citizens, agencies, and organizations in June 1997; and three public meetings were held in July.

A number of additional opportunities for citizen involvement will allow the public and the study team to exchange information as the study progresses. The next public meeting for Site 104 will be held in the Fall of 1997; and later meetings will be held in early 1998 and in the Spring of 1998. These meetings will be announced in newspaper ads and in newsletters or notices that will be sent to addresses on our mailing list. Future newsletters will be distributed approximately every 3 months, with the next newsletter planned for the Fall of 1997. If you (or people you know) wish to receive information about the project and future meetings, please fill out the comment form at the end of this newsletter and return it to us.

In addition to the newsletters and public meetings, citizens may express their ideas, concerns, and comments at any time by contacting the Corps. Addresses and phone numbers are listed at the end of this newsletter.

July Public Scoping Meetings

The three public meetings held in July were “scoping” meetings. The purposes of these meetings were to provide information on the potential project and to gather information from the public on their ideas and concerns. The scoping meetings were held

in Chestertown (July 15), Centreville (July 17), and Annapolis (July 22). In addition to the scoping meetings, which were open to the public at large, an informal meeting was held on July 28 with representatives of commercial and recreational fishing organizations.

Many of the comments and questions raised at the meetings will be answered by field studies that are currently being conducted and are being funded by the MPA. Some of the questions asked, and a brief description of the studies that respond to them is included in this newsletter. Other questions and issues were raised that do not require or are not answered by technical studies. Responses to the non-technical questions will be developed by the study team and the working groups associated with the study.

Non-technical issues relating to socioeconomic, political, and other concerns will be addressed in the EIS. These issues include: the use of the site after the project is completed; other uses for dredged material, such as recycling into topsoil or creating wildlife habitat; a desire for citizen involvement in the site selection, project operations, and monitoring processes for the project; a concern that the Eastern Shore receives more unwanted material from other parts of the state than other areas; using Aberdeen Proving Ground as a placement site; a concern that public opinion does not count; an interest in the economic value of impacted natural resources; a concern that use of Site 104 will lead to more open water placement sites; and a question about the need for Site 104 if the C&D Canal deepening project does not go forward.

The purpose of the July 28 meeting with watermen was to identify their concerns about using Site 104. Although there was general support for the project, the watermen also had many questions and comments. Among the topics discussed were: the valuable fishing area at the northern part of the site and the suggestion that dredged material be placed south of the LP buoy to avoid impacts to the fishery; the concern that tugboats would leave the authorized course and damage fishing gear; a concern that material would be placed outside of the designated placement site; an interest in smoothing the bottom

of the site to reduce snagging of driftnets; and potential use of the site by local governments for placement of material from adjacent counties.

Public Comments

Each of the meetings was successful in producing many comments, concerns, ideas, and suggestions. All of the questions and comments will be considered during the planning process and addressed in the environmental documentation prepared for the study.

Some of the questions and comments made at the meetings are being addressed by field data collection studies that are underway. A number of the questions and a description of the field study that addresses it are summarized below. Most of the study results will be complete in late summer 1997 and will be presented at a public meeting in the Fall.

Q. *What are the existing conditions at the site?*

A. Information being collected now includes studies of the Fish and Benthic Communities using the site; studies on Sediment Nutrient Flux and Sediment Pore Water characteristics; the Bathymetry and Hydrodynamic characteristics of the water column through the site, and Water Quality and Foundations studies. This information will allow an evaluation of the potential impacts of the placement of dredged material on these different aspects of the project site. Final study results are expected in August, 1997.

Q. *What are the potential impacts to fisheries in the area?*

A. Most fish in the immediate vicinity of dredging and placement operations will move away from the site and avoid the descending material as it is being placed. Fish Abundance, Size and Species Composition Studies being performed at the site will provide information on the numbers, species, and sizes of fish currently using the area. This information is being collected through four seasons by using gill nets, acoustics, and mid- and bottom water trawls. After the timing, quantities and methods of placing dredged material are identified, the potential impacts to the fishery can be investigated. Draft study results are expected in August 1997 and final results by early October 1997.

Q. *What are the potential impacts to oysters and other benthic (or bottom dwelling) organisms?*

A. Dredged material will cover benthic organisms in the placement area, however, most of these organisms die off each summer because of reduced oxygen. Material will be placed in a limited area of the site during each placement season. Studies on the Benthic Community at the site will describe the bottom dwelling species (such as shellfish and worms) that live in the area. Draft study results are expected by late August 1997, and final results by late December 1997.

Q. *What impact will the proposed placement have on nutrients in the Bay?*

A. Pore Water/ Solid Phase Characterization -These studies measure the likelihood of nutrient release from existing sediments at Site 104, at different times from various locations within the site. Final study results are expected in August 1997.

Q. *What impacts of open water placement have been identified at Poole's Island?*

A. The Environmental Assessment prepared for Poole's Island predicted short-term impacts near the placement site and this is what has been found over 4 years of monitoring. Site 104 is located in a different area of the Bay, however, with different water quality and hydrodynamic conditions, so this site requires its own complete evaluation. Additional information about Poole's Island is available from Ms. Cecilia Donovan at the Maryland Environmental Service at 410-974-7261.

Q. *What are the potential impacts to water quality caused by the turbidity and nutrient releases that result from dredged material placement?*

Q. *What impacts to water quality will occur in areas near the site?*

Q. *What are the potential impacts to human health as a result of material placement?*

A. Impacts to water quality are not expected to be significant and impacts to human health are not likely. Studies on Water Quality are being performed to characterize the existing water quality conditions in the Site 104 area. This information will be combined with the results of the hydrodynamic modeling studies to predict potential

impacts to water quality caused by placement of dredged material at the site. The goal is to design a scenario that minimizes impacts to the greatest extent possible, using all available information. Draft study results are expected in August, 1997. Final results are expected by December 31, 1997.

Q. *What type of material presently exists at the site?*

A. Foundation Testing is being performed to characterize the physical aspect of existing sediments at Site 104. It is known that this site was used for many years for the placement of navigation dredged material, which, in this area of the Bay, is made up of silts and clays. Information on the grain size and water content of material at the site will be analyzed to determine how much the material has compacted and to predict how additional material placed at the site may consolidate.

Q. *What are the potential impacts to the Deep Trough?*

Q. *What are the potential impacts to the Kent Island and Sandy Point shorelines?*

Q. *What are the potential impacts related to different placement techniques?*

A. Hydrodynamic Modeling of Site 104 will analyze the potential movement of sediment within and from the site. It will provide information on the effects of alternative placement methods and the effects of each method on the movement of the material. More information on the impacts of dredged material placement will be obtained from the water quality modeling which is also being performed. Draft modeling results are expected by January 1998.

Q. *What are the potential impacts to the drinking water on the Eastern Shore?*

A. A Groundwater Assessment was performed by the Maryland Geological Survey. There will be no adverse impacts to drinking water.

Q. *How can we be sure that the material placed at Site 104 is clean?*

A. If Site 104 is found to be an acceptable placement site, the material would be dredged from the approach channels located in the main stem of the Bay. Sediment Quality tests would be conducted

to test and analyze the material prior to dredging. The test results would be sent to the Maryland Departments of the Environment (MDE) and Natural Resources (DNR), the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, and to the County Commissions of Queen Anne's, Kent, and Anne Arundel counties for review. In response to a request by Delegate Wheeler Baker, the Corps has agreed that a non-governmental agency, such as the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, could participate in the sediment collection and analysis.

Q. *If the use of Site 104 is approved, when would dredging begin?*

A. If the site is found acceptable for additional placement, dredging would not occur before the Fall of 1998.

Other Studies and Agency Coordination

In addition to the field studies and agency coordination identified above, other activities are being completed that will provide technical information about the suitability of Site 104 for placement of dredged material. The results of most studies will be available and presented to at a public meeting in the Fall 1997.

- Wildlife (including Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species), Cultural and Archeological Resources, and Hazardous, Toxic and Radioactive Substance Coordination are being completed by Maryland Environmental Service.
- Groundwater Assessment is being completed by Maryland Geological Survey (MGS) and MES.
- Bathymetric Mapping, Side Scan Sonar Surveys, Commercial /Recreational Fishing Activity, and Cumulative Impacts are being completed by the Corps of Engineers.

For More Information

If you would like more information on the Site 104 EIS or have questions or comments, please contact Mark Mendelsohn at 410-962-9499; toll free at 1-

800-295-1610. His e-mail address is:
mark.mendelsohn.@ccmail.nab.usace.army.mil.
Letters can be mailed to the following address:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
CENAB-PL-P (104)
10 South Howard Street
Baltimore, MD 21203-1715

Site 104 Meetings

In addition to the public meetings that will be held in the Fall of 1997, and in the Winter and Spring of 1998, other opportunities for citizens and representatives of natural resource management and monitoring agencies to meet are regularly scheduled.

The **Dredging Needs and Placement Options Program (DNPOP) Citizens Advisory Group** includes representatives from counties, conservation, civic, and community associations; and citizens whose quality of life might be affected by the dredging and material placement activities of the MPA. Members help to evaluate and design proposed projects. For more information please contact Mr. Frank Hamons (MPA) at 410-631-1102.

An **Interagency Workgroup** is sponsored by the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) as part of the Dredging Needs and Placement Program. The group includes technical representatives from Federal and state resource agencies and commercial and recreational anglers. For more information, please contact Mr. Frank Hamons (MPA) at 410-631-1102.

A **Site 104 Monitoring Framework Workgroup** is planned. The group would develop a monitoring framework to be included in the EIS. The framework would provide guidance for evaluating the results of monitoring if the project is implemented. The group would include technical representatives from Federal, state, and local agencies, as well as citizen representatives from Queen Anne's, Kent, and Anne Arundel counties. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in this workgroup please contact Mr. Mark Mendelsohn (Corps) at 410-962-9499.

Stamp

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— Please add my name to the study mailing list.

— Please remove my name from the study mailing list.

Comments:

BALTIMORE

SITE 104

HART MILLER ISLAND

CUTOFF ANGLE

YACHT CLUB CHANNEL

SWAN PT. CHANNEL

CHANNEL

MACOMBS RIVER

LOVE PT.

SANDY PT.

EST. BRIDGE

BAY

CHESAPEAKE

EASTERN BAY

